ALANA HOPE LEVINSON CULTURE APR 1, 2026 6:00 AM

Taylor Lorenz's Screen Time Is Almost 17 Hours a Day. 17!!!

The extremely online journalist and content creator doesn't believe in tech hygiene and yearns for a world where "inbox infinity" is celebrated.

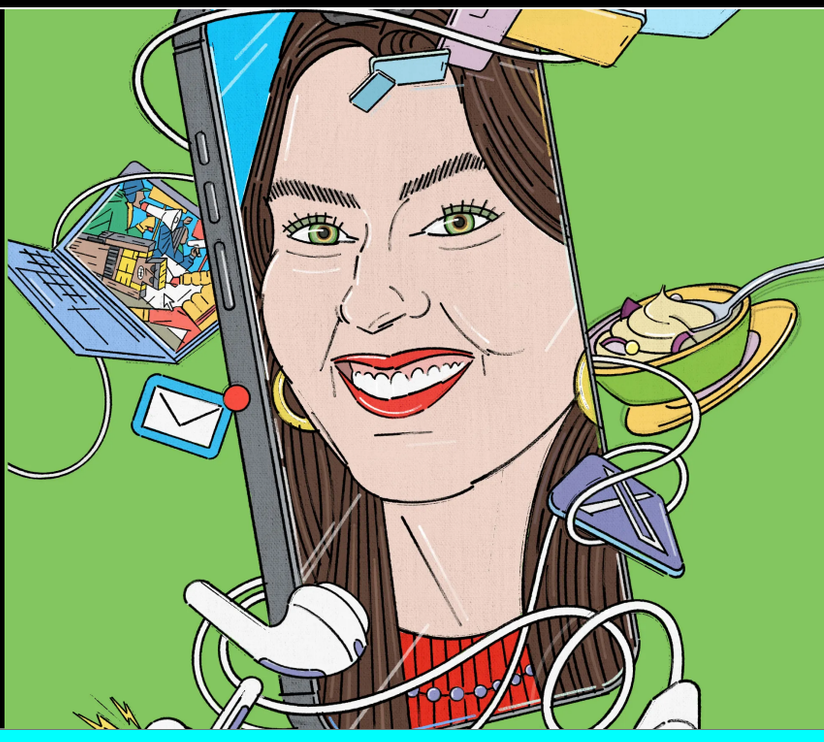

ILLUSTRATION: OSCAR CLIMENT OLLET; GETTY IMAGES

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TAYLOR LORENZ DOESN'T *want to touch grass. The technology and culture journalist wrote the bestselling book* Extremely Online: The Untold Story of Fame, Influence, and Power on the Internet, *and she has the screen time to prove it. Previously a reporter for mainstream media outlets, Lorenz built such a rabid following (and a legion of haters) that she decided to go independent in 2024. Now, almost 100,000 fans subscribe to her newsletter,* User Mag, *for her insider knowledge of virality and her freakish ability to contextualize how internet culture shapes, well, everything.*

For our very first User Behavior, *Lorenz defends her extreme digital diet, revealing how she's first to the AI slop, what it takes to run a* meme page, *and why she's not worried about any of this rotting her brain.*

User Behavior

A regular series that quantifies the tech lifestyles of the rich and/or famous.

Phone model: iPhone 15 Pro

I'm waiting for a decent upgrade. I'll upgrade when I get a better camera. I'm friends with an influencer marketing person at Apple, and I've never gotten a single free product out of it. It's a disappointment. I'm not big-time enough to make it on the gifting!

Computer model: 2024 MacBook Pro, 14-Inch

Standard. Good computer. When I was quitting my job, I thought, what's the closest to my work computer? And I bought that. Also, I edit video. So I need a little more horsepower.

Average screen time across all devices:

16h, 47m

"Listen, if I could put the screen inside my brain, I would."

My iPhone screen time is around 10 hours or something. I am sort of horrified, but the thing is, for some reason, writing is less stressful to me on my phone. So I often

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write the first draft of everything on my phone. I am using it for work; I'm not just on brain-rot Instagram Reels.

I also like to listen to background noise all day, because I hate the silence of downtown LA. I just always have music on. And so my two most used apps are Spotify and YouTube. At night, I like to watch Netflix on my phone because I'm still on my family plan and I can only add so many devices.

I think caring about screen time is stupid. It's a waste of mental energy. I actually think this whole moral panic over screen time is going to be gone in 10 years, because everything's going to be integrated into the world around us already. If you're talking to an AI agent all day and just telling it what to do and interacting with it, you're not going to have to look at a screen. You'll probably just be speaking to some pod in your ear.

Music app: Spotify, Hype Machine

I think I'm one of the last remaining users of Hype Machine, which was really popular during the bloghouse era. It started in 2005 as a way to discover MP3 blogs. I think I started using it in 2010, and I feel like I discover lots of new music on there and also they have remixes and stuff. It's honestly the best, and everybody needs to support them. I'm constantly concerned about them going out of business, because they're just from the indie internet a long time ago.

I don't like the AI playlist and the AI-ification of music recommendations. I like to be given music that I would've never found before. I like the discovery aspect of Hype Machine, because it's curated by bloggers, and there are still music bloggers out there, and they're finding stuff that I wouldn't have found otherwise.

I listen to podcasts 24/7 on Spotify, and I do listen to music on Spotify. I just don't discover new music there as much. I do subscribe to today's top hits. I like pop music.

Number of unread emails: 15,607

I don't believe in Inbox Zero. You kind of just have to treat email as a newsfeed or a Twitter feed—you're going to miss some stuff, but you can't worry about it. You just have to let it go and check in on it sometimes. A lot of people's stress about technology is feeling like they have to complete things or optimize, and I'm just like, whatever. If I see it, I see it. If it's really urgent, someone will find a way to reach me.

Number of unread texts: 712

This number is very down. I was in the thousands. Because I'm in a lot of group chats, if I don't mark the group chats as read, it just becomes a really big number. But I've been moving a lot of my messages to Signal.

I don't have any anxiety about any of it. Who cares? There's this whole industry built on making you check your phone and making you feel like you have to check your phone. And again, I mean, this has gotten me in trouble at work before. It's not a great attitude to have in a job situation, but now that I'm self-employed, I don't have a boss telling me to check my email. It's the only way to live. I couldn't get my work done if I was checking texts and email and stuff. It's too much. Why are we in this cult?

Last person FaceTimed: Barrie Segal (friend)

I don't do a lot of FaceTime. Some friends FaceTime me, but I'm not an outgoing FaceTime person. I mostly FaceTime to gossip. It's great for gossiping, because it's like you're there with them. Gossip is kind of intimate. You've got to FaceTime to make sure that no one's around. Because if you just call and start gossiping, that's a very risky endeavor.

Last thing Googled: "WSJ A-hed"

This is so embarrassing. I Google that every day. I don't even know what that is, but it's the only thing I read in The Wall Street Journal. I don't know why it's called A-hed. They're all just entertaining stories.

Last photo taken: A girl at an anti-ICE protest dragging an ICE agent piñata

COURTESY OF TAYLOR LORENZ

Last AI prompt: “Vegan chickpea recipe garlic eggplant tahini”

My AI history is all just random food assortments. I know AI is bad, blah, blah, blah, but I use it for recipes all the time. I usually use Gemini.

Top three emoji: 💓🥲🙌

The heart is always my number one emoji. And then the other two I just kind of cycle through based on whatever I was texting. I use 🥲 a lot as a reaction to things like “LOL.” It’s also like, the world is bleak. I think I was using it in relation to Jasmine Crockett's Super Bowl ad today.

Favorite social network: X

Ugh, I’m a sicko. X is a terrible right-wing propaganda platform that Elon Musk has bastardized. I know it's a very skewed information environment. It incentivizes toxic behavior. But I love real-time information, and there just is no other platform that provides real-time information at scale that can also give you such a wide-ranging view into different communities. I'm very into tech Twitter, but I hate them all, and I want to see what everyone's up to. I want to see the latest discourse about Alex Karp's latest interview or something. If you want to follow what's going on in Silicon Valley, you’ve got to be on X.

Least favorite social network: Threads

Max Read coined calling Threads the “gas-leak social network,” and it is the perfect description. Threads is absolutely a bizarro world of some of the least media-literate people I've ever encountered. It's crazy. It's like a mix of brand content, hardcore blue MAGA, sort of liberal conspiracism, just really wild AI-generated headlines. There's so much fighting on Threads. It’s truly just a giant soup of misinformation and delusion.

Favorite news source: Terrence O’Connor’s weekly cultural digest videos on TikTok

I like the presentation. It’s a lot of news that I'm going to probably see on PopCrave, but he adds his own analysis. He is extremely good at recognizing things that are in the zeitgeist.

Favorite subreddit: r/SubredditDrama

I love to know the drama. I think mod drama is an eternal form of content on the internet, and I love to keep tabs on what's going on. I also think this subreddit provides a good picture of the social dynamics that are happening on Reddit broadly.

Favorite tech product: 15-foot iPhone charging cord

I have these cords everywhere. Any room that I'm in, I bring it. I don't like to feel tethered. It's so humiliating to have to sit next to an outlet and charge your phone.

Number of burner accounts: unknown

I just make them all the time. The only way to understand a community or trend or phenomenon, you have to get into that world. I also love Real Housewives and Bravo. And so I have a lot of accounts that just exist to follow Summer House news or Bravo, whatever. Because we don't have any sort of coherent tech policy that would give us the ability to exert control over our feeds, I feel like I just have to constantly make new burner feeds to get the information that I want and break out of what my personal algorithm would show me.

Nostalgic tech obsession: Tumblr, BlackBerry Pearl

I remember I had a rule: I would never date anyone that doesn't have BBM, because how am I going to communicate with them? BBM is life. And me and my best friend had both got Blackberry Pearls at the same time, and it was everything to me. I remember getting convinced to get an iPhone finally, and I was like, "God, I'm going to have to give up BBM." And then I got the iPhone and totally never looked back. But I also loved the keyboard of it all.

I had many Tumblrs. This is how I got into media. I was really big on the single-serving Tumblrs. There was a whole trend: "Fuck yeah, bagels." "Fuck yeah, L Train." Or whatever. Most of my Tumblrs were submission-based, but I just loved the discovery aspect. I deleted a lot of them, because I don't know what I was reblogging in 2011. I don't think it was problematic. It was just a weird era of internet content. I do still have "Fuck yeah, communism."

"Tech hygiene" ranking, out of 10: 7

I don't buy into any of the classic "tech hygiene" stuff. Maybe I'm just a pig or something, but the movement exists to cause people stress and anxiety. And I think you just have to relax a little bit and not think about it. But I do try to be good about privacy. I don't post certain things, but overall, just have a secure password. Everything else, don't stress about it. Everyone has our data anyway.

Last screenshot: Clavicular

I have a meme page, Taylor Lorenz 3.0, so my screenshots are just content that I'm going to post. I would say I take probably dozens, if not hundreds, of screenshots a day. My default bookmarking is screenshotting and faving.

Last internet rabbit hole: *Melania* movie meme conspiracy

A few days ago I noticed that dozens (I think actually hundreds) of meme pages were all posting the exact same memes about the Melania movie. They were appearing on everything from many many cat-theme pages, to a page dedicated to Twin Towers remembrance, a Millie Bobby Brown stan account, to pages about boxing, astronomy, and scuba diving adventures. None of the posts had any ad disclosure. Also, the posts are getting terrible engagement, but the meme pages are keeping them up, which really only happens when they're getting paid. After like eight hours of digging I found the agency behind it all. Then a new TikTok Shop ecommerce content house came up on my feed, and I started looking into that.

All day I'm like, "Wait, what's that? What's that?" It's just fun to go down and see what's going on in whatever corner of the internet. A lot of them are about scams. "What way is this platform being manipulated or what scam is this person running?" I have severe unmedicated ADHD, and every single day I start down a dozen different rabbit holes.

A version of this article appears in the May/June 2026 issue. Subscribe now.

Comments (5) BACK TO TOP

Ask a question or leave a helpful tip, suggestion or opinion that is relevant and respectful for the community.

WILLA

OPINION • 2 months ago

Love this interview and enjoyed getting to learn about one of my favorite tech & online journalists. I really appreciate how she pushes back against the moral panic of tech usage and goes beyond the low-hanging fruit of "screen bad, other stuff good"

This is also the first time I've been presented with an alternative to the "inbox zero" mentality. Idk if I'm quite there myself, but that's cool to think about :)

4 Reply

YEAH

Replying to WILLA a month ago

I hate to accuse people of sock puppeting but the only way a real human could make this comment is if you are TL or her mom or aunt or something

Reply

GA_

2 months ago

This is awful

4 Reply

JANK_AND_OVERDUE

OPINION • 2 months ago

I think if someone is so terminally online, they have a warped perspective of how the actual world works. 16 hours per day is something else, and having this person give advice, is like having an obese person give lectures on exercise (or discourage it)

4 Reply

KSA

Replying to JANK_AND_OVERDUE 2 months ago

dunno. seems to me shes doing alright. and what advice is she giving? isnt she just saying how she spends her days? wasnt this an article for fun? a fun article about someone who thrives in her choices? to be terminally online.

oc im also terminally online. i work here, learn here. its great. i inhale journalism quantities of foreign and tech policy without it being my job. i read multiple areas out of interest, including research and engineering. kinda depends on what you do with online and what your capacity is.

5 Reply

TEDSGREATFRIEND

Replying to JANK_AND_OVERDUE 2 months ago

Love how the only example you could come up with was using obesity and exercise, because that's not a totally unhinged place to jump to lol.

3 Reply

Hide replies

SMATTIM

OPINION • a month ago

The paper mag mentioned "inbox infinity" and says Taylor Lorenz has 15,607 unread emails.

Lightweight! I currently have 486,007.

1 Reply

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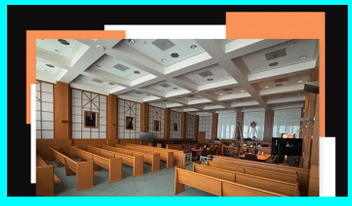

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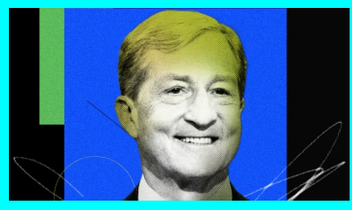
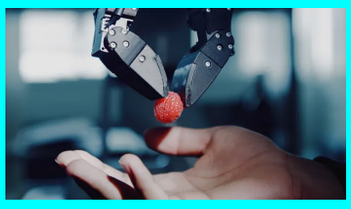
KATIE DRUMMOND



Tom Steyer Wants to Save California From Billionaires. But Also Doesn't Want Them to Leave

The hedge fund billionaire turned gubernatorial candidate wants to tax California's ultrawealthy, regulate AI, and keep Silicon Valley happy at the same time. Good luck with that.

KATIE DRUMMOND



I've Covered Robots for Years. This One Is Different

From sorting chicken nuggets to screwing in lightbulbs, Eka's robotic claw feels like we're approaching a ChatGPT moment for the physical world.

WILL KNIGHT

Shein Buying Everlane Actually Makes Perfect Sense

The acquisition struck many people as a bizarre mismatch, but it's really a sign of where Chinese ecommerce giants are already going.

LOUISE MATSAKIS

You Can Get Some of Your Nudes Removed From the Internet Under a New Law

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A Woman Was in the US Legally. She Was Deported Anyway

María de Jesús Estrada Juárez was applying for her green card and thought she was doing everything right. Instead, she was arrested and deported to Mexico.

VITTORIA ELLIOTT

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